Security in electronic communication: digital signatures and encryption

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The Committee adopted the report by Wolfgang ULLMANN (Greens, D) on a Commission paper on security and trust in electronic telecommunication. Electronic commerce is set to be one of the driving forces behind the development of the global information society. The new technology will become increasingly important for people in their everyday lives and not just in commerce. The report calls on the Commission and Member States to press ahead with dialogue and agreements at international level to allow the creation of a worldwide virtual economic area through common technical standards and mutual recognition. It stresses the importance of international dialogue between the European Union and various international organizations such as the OECD, UN, ITU, ICC and WTO, so as to avoid a situation in which regulations form a barrier to trade with major trading partners. At the same time, the committee underlines the need for reciprocity in trade relations. The general rules designed to strengthen trust in this area also need to be sufficiently flexible to allow for the incorporation of new technical developments. Lastly, the committee believes that the development of a market in data encryption could, despite controversy concerning illicit uses of this technique, be of considerable value to the development of electronic commerce as well as guaranteeing the fundamental right to privacy and confidentiality in communications.